

HumRRO
Workshop in Intercultural Communication

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE USERS

The HumRRO Workshop in Intercultural Communication is intended for use in training programs which prepare Americans for overseas assignments requiring effective interaction with host nationals. It is designed for individuals who have evidenced an interest in improving their skill in intercultural communication, and who are familiar with basic social science concepts and their application.

The objective of the workshop is to develop the participants' ability to recognize the various subtle ways in which their own thought processes, feelings, and behavior are influenced by cultural factors. This ability will increase their effectiveness in intercultural communication because it will reduce their tendency to make unwarranted assumptions about the host nationals with whom they are interacting.

The skill in question is difficult to acquire, particularly by persons who have not previously recognized the fact that they are influenced by cultural factors in ways over which they have little control, and of which they are only dimly aware. Some persons actually strongly resist accepting that fact.

The workshop exercise involves participants in an analysis of videotaped excerpts from conversations between Americans working overseas (Army officers, Peace Corps Volunteers, a Foreign Service officer, and a businessman) and a host national. The excerpts were selected to show subtle manifestations of cultural characteristics on the part of the Americans. The participants' task in the exercise is to learn how to

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recognize such characteristics. As in real-life situations, this is quite difficult, because of the simultaneous presence of other characteristics, such as those resulting from the Americans' education, occupation, role, organizational affiliation, or from situational constraints.

Various techniques are employed to facilitate the learning process. The most important of these is the grouping of the excerpts into sequences, with each sequence showing several different manifestations of the same cultural characteristic, while the other characteristics are being varied from excerpt to excerpt. Thus, in any one sequence a given cultural characteristic is a constant element which is gradually brought into focus.

Workshop groups should be limited in size. Based on past experience the optimum number of participants seems to be about ten. The duration of the workshop can range from one to two days. Compressing it into less than a day makes the experience of questionable value for most participants.

Instructors selected for administering the workshop should have a level of education at least equivalent to that required for a Master's degree in a social science, should be qualified for conducting seminar-type instruction, and should have at least one year of experience in working with host nationals in another culture. In addition, they require two to three days of special training which will be provided by HumRRO.

Development of the workshop "package" will be completed in March 1973. It will include videotapes, instructor training, workshop materials for instructors and participants, and a test designed to help the instructors evaluate the participants' level of ability. The cost of preparing a user

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package (i.e., the cost of new videotapes, dubbing, instructor training, and producing copies of materials) has not yet been determined.

For additional information write to Dr. A. J. Kraemer, HumRRO,
300 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

December 1972

2 February 1973

Note for Registrants
in Human Resources Relations Organization (HumRRO) Exercise:

Date:	Tuesday, 13 February
Hours:	0900 - 1700
Location:	300 N. Washington St., Alexandria, Va. - 7th floor
Directions:	<p>HumRRO is in an office building next door to Alexandria National Bank on west side of street. A landmark is a large clock on sidewalk in front of the bank. Commercial <u>parking</u> is behind bank.</p> <p>N. Washington St. is a connecting link of the George Washington Parkway, through Alexandria.</p>
Coffee & Snacks	<p>Coffee will be available close to 0900 outside the Conference Room, 7th floor</p> <p>Coin-operated machines are in the 3rd floor lounge</p>
Preparation	None is necessary
Administrator	Dr. Alfred J. Kraemer of the Social Science Division of HumRRO is in charge of this activity

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The following is an excerpt from the diary kept by computer engineer Jack Howard, captain of the U.S. table-tennis team that

visited China:

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"I seemed to have some kind of a communications gap with many of the Chinese I met. I had a number of talks, for example, with our interpreter, but we sometimes had difficulty getting through to each other. He spoke excellent English, and I used very simple words, but he often apologized and said I should get a better interpreter because 'I just don't understand what you are saying.' I used words like 'individual' and 'unique'. They are words he knows, but he couldn't relate them to the idea of doing what you want to do. 'Do what I want to do?' one puzzled Chinese asked me. He looked terribly confused, as if to say: 'How do you do that?' I guess in China you have to do what the chairman tells you to do and then everything is cool and happy."

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Outline for Focusing on Cultural Characteristics
of Ideas and Behavior

Every person thinks and acts in some respects

(a) like all other persons

(b) like some other persons

(c) like no other person

(b1) like other persons of the same sex

(b2) like other persons of the same occupation

(b3) like other persons of the same age

(b4) like other persons in the same role

(b5) like other persons in the same situation

(b6) - - - - -

(b7) like other persons of the same culture (sub-culture,
ethnic group)

The purpose of the workshop is for the participants to
learn to recognize manifestations of category b7 among
Americans, especially among themselves.

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SITUATIONS

The pieces of dialogue ("excerpts") that you will see are from conversations involving several Americans working in an imaginary foreign country. Each is interacting with a host national during meetings occurring in the context of a job situation. A description of these situations follows.

Situation One

Major Smith, an officer in the United States Army, has been assigned as an advisor at the host-country military academy. He is to provide assistance to the academy in matters pertaining to the improvement of instruction. He has to accomplish this primarily through interaction with the Deputy Director of Instruction, Lieutenant Colonel Konda. At various times during his tour of duty he meets with Colonel Konda in the latter's office. (The excerpts are from the conversations taking place during some of these meetings.)

Situation Two

Mr. Smith, an American oil company executive, has been chosen to be the first Director of Training at a new refinery being constructed by the company near one of the provincial capitals of the host country. A training center is being built nearby to implement the company's policy of training local people for jobs at new refin-

eries. Mr. Smith will be responsible for the operation of the center. He is visiting the provincial capital several months before the center's completion in order to make plans and preparations for recruiting people for the training program. One of his concerns is to make sure that prospective trainees have the required minimum level of education. He has two meetings with Mr. Konda, the man in charge of the provincial office of the Ministry of Education, to discuss the recruiting problem with him. (The excerpts are from the conversations taking place during these meetings.)

Situation Three

Mr. Smith, a Foreign Service Information Officer, has been assigned to the United States Embassy as Cultural Affairs Officer. One of his tasks is to develop cultural programs for university students that would enhance the image of the United States with that segment of the population. He has been on the job a few weeks. He has visited the chancellor of the local university who told him that he should work closely with Mr. Konda, the Dean for Student Life. Mr. Smith visits Mr. Konda on various occasions. (The excerpts are from the conversations taking place during Mr. Smith's first two meetings with Mr. Konda.)

Situation Four

Major Smith, an officer in the United States Army Corps of Engineers, has been assigned as an advisor to Major Khan, the Commander of a host-country engineer battalion stationed in a rural area. His mission is to advise Major Khan in the development of a civic action program for the battalion. During briefings he received upon arrival

in the country, Major Smith was informed that the Ministry of Community Development had overall responsibility for civic action, and that the battalion's plans and activities would have to be coordinated with Mr. Konda, the man in charge of the district office of the ministry. On his way to the battalion's location, Major Smith met Mr. Konda briefly during a courtesy visit. He has now been on the job a few weeks. An occasion arises for him to visit the district seat, and at Major Khan's request, he visits Mr. Konda to inform him of the current status of the battalion's plans. (The excerpts are from the conversation taking place during that visit.)

Situation Five

Mr. Smith, a Peace Corps Volunteer, is a member of a contingent of Volunteers sent to the host country to work in community development. He and another Volunteer were assigned to a village a few weeks ago. Mr. Smith was told that the Peace Corps could not furnish any equipment or supplies, and that he would have to obtain these through Mr. Konda, the man in charge of the district office of the Ministry of Community Development. During his initial trip from the capital to the village, Mr. Smith paid Mr. Konda a brief courtesy visit. He now visits him again to discuss various matters of concern to him. (The excerpts are from the conversation taking place during this visit, and from subsequent conversations.)

Situation Six

Miss Smith, a Peace Corps Volunteer, is a member of a contingent of Volunteers sent to the host country to work as teachers and teachers'

aids. She and another Volunteer were assigned to a rural school a few weeks ago. She was told that the Peace Corps could not furnish any supplies, books, or equipment--that this was the responsibility of Mr. Konda, the man in charge of the district office of the Ministry of Education. During her initial trip from the capital to the town where the school is located, Miss Smith paid Mr. Konda a brief courtesy visit. She now visits him again to discuss various matters of concern to her. (The excerpts are from the conversation taking place during this visit, and from subsequent conversations.)

Situation Seven

This situation is the same as Situation Four, but it involves a different Major Smith.

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REMINDERS FOR PARTICIPANTS

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1. DO NOT focus on the effectiveness of the Americans in accomplishing their objectives.
2. DO NOT focus on personal traits or idiosyncracies of the Americans.
3. DO NOT focus on social blunders of the Americans with respect to host-country customs and habits
4. DO NOT focus on the adeptness of the Americans as role-players.
5. DO NOT focus on characteristics of the Americans that are imposed by the situation in which they find themselves.